

Ammo Plants Set Employment Cuts

Elwood Unit

Within the next nine months a curtailment of manufacturing activity at Joliet Arsenal's Elwood Ordnance Plant will affect some 200 workers, it was reported today as the Army announced plans to close three government owned ammunition plants and to reduce activity in five others.

According to the Herald-News Bureau in Washington, D. C., the 200 employees to be laid off represent a 14 per cent reduction in personnel. At present, 1,423 persons work at the Elwood Unit. The employment will be dropped to 1,223.

The Associated Press reported that the plants to be shut down are the Badger Ordnance Works at Baraboo, Wis.; the Milan, Tenn., Arsenal Industrial Works, and the St. Louis, Mo., Ordnance plant.

The plants to be curtailed during the next nine months are the Joliet Arsenal, operated by the government; the Holston Ordnance Works at Kingsport, Tenn., the Iowa Ordnance Plant at Burlington, Ia., the Lone Star Ordnance Plant at Texarkana, Tex., and the Radford, Va., Arsenal, operated by the Hercules Powder Co.

The Army said that, percentage wise, in Joliet, the reduction is "very small" but that it is the biggest reduction in number of employees for any of the plants being closed or curtailed.

The Army said that the closing and operating slow-downs are due to a combination of factors including completion of contracts, reduction in requirements for ammunition and the current economy drive.

The Department of the Army said that it is continuing its review of the plant operations here and is making every effort to find other employment for persons whose jobs have been eliminated.

All the plants involved are making ammunition or ammunition components.

U. S. Rubber Co.

In line with economy cuts in the U. S. Army's budget, the production of explosives at the Joliet Arsenal's Kankakee unit, which is operated by the United States Rubber Co., will end by Sept. 30, resulting in the lay-off of 500 plant workers by December, it was announced by Paul Blunt, plant manager.

When in full operation the installation employs approximately 1,000 workers in the production of T.N.T. products for the army.

Gradually as production is stopped and the facility placed in a standby condition, the staff will be reduced still further to 250 workers, who will be retained indefinitely as maintenance personnel, so that production could be resumed quickly if needed, Blunt said.

The 250 mark will not be reached until sometime next spring, stressed Blunt.

The U. S. Rubber Co. re-activated the Kankakee unit in 1951 to meet Korean war needs and has maintained continuous production to the present time.

During World War II, the sprawling TNT works was operated by Du Pont, until April 1944, at which time United States Rubber Co. took over the operation. The unit was placed in standby after the war.